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Convention Question-

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SPEECH
OF
R. R. BRIDGERS, ESQ.,
OF EDGECOMBE,
ON THE
CONVENTION QUESTION,

Delivered in Committee of the Whole in the House of Commons of North-Carolina, January 14th, 1861.

MR. CHAIRMAN:—The measure under consideration is the most important that has occupied the attention of any legislature since the formation of the Federal Union. Questions of policy have arisen from time to time which have involved matters of great interest; propositions for Constitutional reform have excited deep feelings and have aroused sectional jealousy; but these questions of great importance sink into insignificance compared with a call of a convention to determine our future relations with our confederated republic. To remain in or go out of the Union addresses the interest and patriotism of all. The severance of the Union that has given us prosperity and protection should not be dealt with as matters of ordinary policy. It should be considered well in all its bearings. With the patriotism of freemen let us rise above all party strife and dissensions, and unite in the protection of our common rights.

Nature has been lavish of her gifts to us. She has given the elements of a great State. No like space of territory on the American continent has a greater variety of soil and climate, yielding a greater abundance of productions for the wants of man, and at the same time affording a higher degree of health to its inhabitants. As abundant as these resources are, their development for a long time to come will depend on the supply of African slave labor, the continuance of which may depend on our action on the bill under consideration.

The question involved is, shall we submit to the oppression of higher law dogmas, and infidel vagaries of fanaticism, or shall we, as our ancestors did, seek protection in a new government? There is but one proper way of deciding this question; that is to call a convention, and let the people, from whom all political power is derived, speak and declare their will.

The legislature has no power to decide these questions; all power not vested in the legislature, and not delegated to the Federal Govern-

ment, is reserved to the people, who have vested in us the authority to call a convention. Article 4th and section 1st of the Amended Constitution reads, "no convention of the people shall be called by the General Assembly unless by the concurrence of two-thirds of all the members of each House of the General Assembly.

The people's constitution has delegated to the legislature the power to say that there shall be a convention, or that there shall be no convention; the members of the General Assembly who are supposed to reflect the will of their constituents are vested with the power of putting into motion the main spring of sovereign popular action. They have only such authority as is delegated to them by the constitution, and nowhere does that instrument empower them to limit the popular will represented in sovereign convention. A convention of the people have a right to abrogate all constitutions and laws heretofore made; if, then, this legislature should pass an act of limitation, the convention would, at its pleasure, repeal it. The servant may request but never command his master.

When the call is made and the convention duly organized, it is the supreme legislature of the people; it is their representative voice, knowing no limit, save what is imposed by the people themselves according to the forms of the constitution; any action otherwise is revolution.

If we had the power, I would propose several restrictions and limitations; among them I would require the action of the convention to be submitted to the people for ratification. The people, however, have this matter in their own hands, and no doubt will exercise it. They will elect delegates to carry out their will; they will have these matters discussed, and their representatives will fully understand them and fully represent them. To suppose the delegates will misrepresent their constituents is a supposition contrary to our experience, and is against the theory and practice of our government.

If, however, a majority of the legislature shall be of different opinion as to our power of limiting the convention, I will still co-operate in the call, while I think it will be altogether discretionary with the convention, when organized, whether or not they will be governed by these limitations. It seems to me that the extraordinary importance of the issue demands that it should not be complicated with other questions. Already four of the southern States have withdrawn from the Union, and nearly all of the remainder of the slave States will have followed before the fourth of March; we have like interest and like grievances with them, and surrounded by common charges have the same motive to action.

The government is virtually destroyed; we cannot remain idle spectators, we must continue under the rule of the north or go with our friends of the South. The indications are, that all of our sister southern States, with a single exception, will call conventions at an early day, while all, both north and south, seem to be preparing for the conflict.

Shall North-Carolina do nothing? For two months we have sit here without coming to a conclusion.

We are invited to consult and take action with some of our sister States, shall we refuse to take counsel with them? If North-Carolina wishes to lay down an ultimatum, the legislature is not the proper body. For twenty years southern legislatures have, in vain, made their remonstrances against the aggressive acts of the north, an ultimatum laid down by this legislature would have a like result, for they know we have no such power. One of the great difficulties in getting our wrongs redressed is, the north believes, that we are divided, that among the people south they have numerous advocates of their side of the question; a delay of southern States to make preparation for prompt action will confirm them in their opinion and make them more determined and obstinate in their resistance to our just demands.

We can only act by a convention; the Constitution of the United States provides that "no State, without the consent of Congress, shall enter into any compact with any other State."

The people of each of the States, in their sovereign, representative capacity, are the only tribunals to judge of the infractions of the federal compact, and to decide on the mode and measure of redress. Great Britain acknowledged the independence of thirteen separate States who by that act became independent nations. Afterwards those nations made mutual treaties with each other in the shape of the Federal Constitution, delegating to the government certain powers to be held for the benefit and mutual protection of the people of all the States. Sovereign States are the judges of the due execution of treaties and compacts made between them. We have no tribunal created for the purpose of deciding disputed political questions between the General Government and State governments. The States in their sovereign capacities, through the action of the people, created the Federal Union, and, like nations making treaties with each other, must, of necessity, judge of their due execution. Any wilful act of violation of the federal compact is a just cause of dissolution of the Union, but whether a dissolution shall be insisted on is a question of policy to be decided by the aggrieved party. If a State decides to withdraw, her citizens owe no allegiance to the Union of States; they have to look to their State for their allegiance and protection.

We are, however, told by some we are traitors, and are liable to be condemned and executed for the treason. Does the compact of the thirteen States bind us together any stronger than the colonies were bound to Great Britain? They revolted against the British government; and their citizens were never treated as traitors. The resistance by armed force on the part of citizens to their government is adjudged by the laws of nations to be treason, while resistance of citizens under an organized government has never been considered treason.

The American States are the boasted asylum of the down-trodden and oppressed of all countries; the home of the political refugees of all nations. Will it be said that they can stay the hand of the oppres-

sor against all except her own people? If this be so, we have to learn new ideas of American liberty. Call it treason, rebellion, or lawful secession, North Carolina will withdraw from the Union unless her rights are protected in it.

If the next Administration shall pursue an aggressive policy, without a convention to take us promptly out of the Union, our State will be in a very defenceless condition. If it should become necessary to secede, our enemies would have it in their power to occupy our forts and strong points with their troops before we could convene the legislature for the purpose of calling a convention. Let us have the representative popular will in a condition to speak.

There are those who hope that the difficulties may be adjusted. I heartily wish they may, though I see no grounds on which to indulge the hope. Our safety lies in prompt withdrawal, unless immediate evidences are given that our rights will be admitted and maintained in the Union.

The Federal Constitution was formed for the protection of the persons and property of the citizens of the States; in the present state of the public mind, it is rapidly becoming powerless for either. Many of the northern States boldly ignore the constitution by their press, their public opinion, and their statute laws. They have nullified the statute of Congress for the rendition of fugitive slaves, and have made it penal for persons to arrest or assist in the arresting of runaway negroes. Their citizens steal and entice away, annually, hundreds of thousands of dollars of slave property, and when the hand of justice demands the punishment of their crimes, they are protected by their State authorities, that deny the negro is the subject of property. Armed bands of lawless men have been sent into the common territories for the purpose of driving off southern men with their slave property so as to increase the number of slave States; emissaries have been sent into the States to excite servile war and insurrection. They have attempted to destroy the peace and safety of our homes by the application of the torch of the incendiary, and the knife of the assassin. In the border States they have urged the slave to use every means for the destruction of his master, with the promise of protection if he could make his escape into their States. They have invaded their sister States with armed forces for the purpose of exciting slaves to rebellion. Having failed in the execution of that wretched purpose, some of them made their escape, and having been demanded as refugees from justice, were protected by the governors of States whose plain constitutional duty was to have surrendered them.

When the raid into Virginia was investigated, prominent citizens of northern States were discovered to have been complicated with it, and men high in place were fixed with a guilty knowledge; in the place of punishments for their crimes they are advanced higher in public estimation. Large numbers of people celebrate the execution of the principal felon as martyrdom to the cause of freedom. These fanatics proclaim the Union a "covenant with hell," and avow their purpose to use it for our destruction.

A distinguished son of our own State, a few years past, received an appointment from the government to a foreign mission, and while on his way to the place of his duties, in passing through a northern State with his servants, they were forcibly taken from him without compensation, and no redress, either by the State or General Government, was ever offered to him. Had a foreign minister of another country received the like injury and insult, a prompt demand for redress would have been made, had it not been given, the wrong would have been avenged with the sword. They have been taught to hate and despise us; there is, to-day, greater feelings of hostility between the two sections of country than there was between great Britain and our States previous to the outbreak of the revolution. They have consummated the crowning act by the election of a sectional President, who, if he were to go into fifteen of the southern States and proclaim his principles, would be adjudged a felon by the laws of those States. With all these outrages staring us in the face, we are gravely told that there is no cause for disunion, that we should be worse off with our institutions out of it than in it. A tame submission to the hand of aggression has always been followed up with the iron heel of tyranny; if a single act would finish the wrong, expediency might consider the policy of submission. All history teaches us whenever a people quietly submit to wilful oppression, the day of their degradation is near at hand.

The wild fanaticism that has brought about the election of Abraham Lincoln to the Presidency of the United States commenced exhibiting itself in the halls of Congress about a quarter of a century ago. At first it attracted but little attention; it was considered the ravings of diseased imaginations. Initiated at an early day into the pulpit, it began to extend to the press and to political assemblies, and has extended itself from year to year, until a majority of the people are tainted with it. All the northern legislatures are in its crushing grasp, and are ready to obey its mandates. Soon after the nomination of Lincoln, his friends declared that his election would be the downfall of slavery; and after his election they declared that the southern States were and would continue to be without influence in the government.

They have declared that they will get possession of the entire government and abolish slavery according to law. They would have had the entire control of all the departments of government after the next congress even if none of the States had withdrawn.

The apportionment under the census of 1860 gives four additional members to the present number; the south loses eighteen, which will require a gain of twenty to enable them to hold their own. If the apportionment had been made before the present Congress was elected, the black republicans would have had a decided majority in the House of Representatives. With every northern legislature under their control, they will gerrymander the Congressional districts, so as to stifle the voice of the patriotic citizens, and instead of losing members, they will take nearly all they have to elect. If there should be any reaction with the people, the executive patronage with the gerrymandering of

legislative districts will keep up the majorities in the several legislatures.

The year 1863, with the admission of Kansas, will complete their control of the Senate, if the Senators from all the States were present. Thus their control of both branches of Congress would be complete. Six of the judges of the supreme court are very old. In the natural course of events during the next administration vacancies must happen, which, if filled with these partizans, will give them the majority of the court; this gives them the control of the entire Federal government. In the mean time if vacancies should not occur fast enough to suit their purposes, the land offices under their control, free homes under the homestead bill, emigrant aid societies actively at work with the proper direction of foreign immigration, the black republicans can locate population with that already in the territories for the manufacture of at least ten if not twelve new States in the next administration. These new States would require an increase of the number of supreme court judges, which would give them the court; but if they should fail in all this, they will not hesitate, with both branches of Congress in their power, to re-organize the court and increase the number of judges regardless of the public wants. All they would want of a cordon of free States around us would be a slice of Mexican territory on the west of Texas; with the power in their hands they would not fail to acquire it either by purchase or conquest.

The republicans possessed of the control of all the departments of government—executive, legislative and judicial, backed up with the army and navy, and sustained by all the northern legislatures imbued with the spirit of fanaticism and higher law consciences, the South would be in a very defenceless condition. Our forts and other places occupied by the Federal government to carry out their edicts, their emissaries from the border free States inciting insurrection and stealing negroes; with their vessels plundering the large plantations immediately on the coast, they would begin the work in earnest of reducing the area of slavery.

The effect of this policy carried out, which is the avowed policy of the next administration, would bring ruin on society and all the great industrial and productive pursuits of the South.

Under this policy the price of land would advance and labor depreciate; and from the necessity of the case slave labor would come in competition with white labor. High prices would induce many of the more energetic non-slaveholders to sell their land and immigrate to a new free State where land would be cheaper. The black population would increase very rapidly, while the white would diminish. Many of the wealthy people, as was the case in some of the West India Islands, would reside abroad, and take away each year for investment the nett proceeds of their crops. The land owners feeling but little interest in a country they know to be doomed, there would be no incentive to the improvement of the soil, while the price of labor would be depreciating the productive value of the land would diminish.

The white population, under an unnatural pressure, with the induce-

ments for emigration to the new free States, would rapidly diminish, while the slave population, being confined to a limited district, would as rapidly increase. At no distant day the country would have a redundant population, with the negro largely in the excess. If the negro should murder the white race, as was done in the island of St. Domingo, the homes of our ancestors would fall into the hands of the half-civilized Africans, who would soon relapse into barbarism; and the fairest and most productive fields of America would be occupied by the savage. Ultimately the wants of the superior race would require the expulsion of the negro from the sugar, rice and cotton fields, to be worked by some inferior race under the hand of constraint.

But, owing to the greater diversity of soil, climate, health and production, I do not think our country would be a like case to St. Domingo. The rich, miasmatic districts being more productive and less healthy, the negro population at an early day would rapidly accumulate in them, while the greater part of the white population would either emigrate or go to the more salubrious districts of the upland and mountain sections. Frequent insurrections would occur in the districts densely populated by slaves; the servants from other districts would run away and receive protection among them. Thus there would exist for years a guerrilla war between the races. Ultimately in the districts of excessive slave population the slave would overpower the white man. The country would present alternate neighborhoods of the two races, unless the superior race, excited at the massacres of its own race, should commence and wage a bloody war of extermination. If they did, the result would not long remain in doubt; the African, like the other savage races, would become extinct by famine and war.

Let us, however, look at the Abolitionist view of the question. They believe that there is an equality between the white and black races which will be eventually asserted; that free negroes and white men will live mixed up in one common nation; that the two races will intermarry. What would the white man think of a negro son-in-law or negro daughter-in-law? As unnatural as it may appear this condition of society is tolerated by their teachings. What would be said of white children, negro and mulatto children mingled together in the same church, going to the same school, and eating at the same table? Schools and colleges have been built up for this purpose, already in some of the free States.

This is no distorted view; it is the legitimate result of the doctrine of the equality of races, as taught by abolitionism. If the non-slaveholder should be unwilling to fight for the slave property, he will ever be found resisting negro equality and free negro aggression. Whenever the issue shall be fairly made up and presented, shall the negroes remain slaves or become free negroes among us, the voice of North Carolina will respond from Currituck to Cherokee, no more free negroes in our State. The white man will never permit his wife and daughter and children to descend to an equality with free negroes. He will never submit to live in a land of free negroes and amalgamation. He

would fight the bloodiest war of extermination that has ever been recorded in the annals of time.

But take another view of the subject : suppose the negro, after being liberated, was to consent to live in a state of inferiority among us, their presence would become intolerable. Disposed, under the most favorable circumstances to be lazy and vicious, they would make no provisions for themselves or families, but rely on stealing and plundering for their support. Already in our State the lands in the neighborhood of free negroes are depreciated from their presence. If our people cannot stand forty thousand free negroes, what would they say to half a million of them in lieu of the present number of slaves. If these negroes were freed, there is not enough money in the State to send them to Liberia; and the northern States would never agree to take them into their midst. I venture to predict there is not an intelligent non-slaveholder in the State but what would say it would be better for the negroes and better for the whites, that these slaves should be kept in slavery than to be turned loose on society. The people of North-Carolina will never submit to be crowded out by a free negro population; nor will they consent to allow the slave population to become excessive for the want of room for expansion.

Any person who will examine into the history of the negroe will see that his condition is greatly improved by his servitude under an American master. So long as the fresh soils further south are open for his labor, we can have no excess of that kind of population; the virgin soils will draw them away quite as fast as we can spare them. Our true policy is to keep the territory to the south of us open. If we were a separate confederacy we should have no difficulty in acquiring, by purchase, such territory as we may from time to time need.

In the present condition of the country, we are all interested in slavery, and with no law limiting the ownership of this sort of property to any particular family, all can acquire it who wish. The large slave owner of this generation is the child of him that owned none in a preceding generation, and he that owns none at the present is frequently descended from the large owner of a preceding day. Property under our institutions is constantly changing hands. There is nothing to prevent prudent and industrious men from accumulating it, and they can invest in land, negroes, stocks, bonds or any of the industrial pursuits at their option.

Negro, like other property, yields a support to all the departments of the government; it pays tax both in peace and war, and is a part of the capital of the country. It is estimated that of the \$12,000,000 of cotton, corn, wheat, tobacco, naval stores, lumber, fish, fruit, and other products exported, at least \$11,000,000 is the product of slave labor. The great swamp district which it was said by the late Mr. Gallatin, was destined to become the great grainery of the country, between the coast and the Alleghany ridge, is dependent on this labor for its development, and when developed will produce an excess of pork for home purposes, and five times the grain that the entire State now yields. The mining interest will look to this source for development, or will have to

depend on that class of foreign population which has done so much to injure northern society ; a population which no man wants among us who is fully acquainted with it.

From the proceeds of slave-grown labor the merchant gets his money to pay for his goods bought out of the State, and exchange is supplied to pay the interest on the debt of North Carolina, which will soon amount to fifteen millions of dollars. It is true, that the merchant receives from the non-slaveholder money that was earned by his own labor ; but what would that money be worth in New York unless produce is sent there to redeem the bank notes ? It is very clear that if we buy of a Northern State ten millions of dollars worth of goods, we must either send the gold and silver or some kind of produce to pay for them. The merchant usually takes with him exchange which is the proceeds of produce sold in other markets, or he takes with him bank bills to pay for his goods, and the person who receives the bills sends them back to the State and they are redeemed by the proceeds of the produce sales.

Many of the comforts of life are derived from this kind of labor our tables and firesides constantly keep them before our eyes. The sugar, coffee, molasses, and cotton we use are derived from it, and without this labor these articles would become of such high price that a man of moderate means could not afford to use them.

Abolish slavery, says the Abolitionist, and white men will come in to cultivate the soil and make up the deficit of production. A large part of these slave-grown products are grown in countries where the white man cannot labor, for the want of health ; but the negro can, free from any unusual sickness. What would become of the white man and his family growing sugar in Louisiana, in the Mississippi bottom, or cotton on the Red or Arkansas river, or corn on the bottoms of the Roanoke, the Tar and Neuse, or rice on the Cape Fear or Peedee ? They could not live. If these negroes were liberated they would still be among us, and experience teaches that they will not work without a master. Southern slavery has done more to civilize the African than the combined action of all the missionaries of the world. The African in his native land was a cannibal, a man that would eat his own species ; here is a half-civilized man who has his own condition improved and contributes to the comforts of others.

History teaches that no nation has lost its institutions without losing its nationality, they are so intimately interwoven that there is a mutuality of dependence. Man is much the creature of education—his habits are a second nature, and when suddenly changed against his will, his progressive action becomes paralyzed and is liable to become subjugated by the first superior power that comes in collision with him. Greece yielded her institutions and with them her nationality to Rome. Centuries after, the Romans in like manner yielded to the northern nations of Europe ; the Norman overrode the Anglo-Saxon, who did not recover his nationality until he regained his institutions. If the history of the past be an index to the future, no two races can occupy the same country on terms of equality.

The change of our labor institutions would paralyze all the depart-

ments of industry, the planter, the mechanic, the merchant, the ship-owner, and all the avocations of life would sustain great injuries. In undergoing the change our people would suffer for a century to come, while the African will not be benefitted. Our towns and villages would go to decay for want of business, our railroads to ruin for the want of employment, and rich fields of cotton and grain would be exchanged for the old field pine, while much of the better classes, both slaveholder and non-slaveholder would seek a home in a more prosperous country.

There is no case in history in which republics have existed for any length of time without slavery; in many of the most renowned battle fields there were more Grecian slaves than Grecian soldiers. George III previous to the Revolutionary war was admonished by one of his wisest counsellors that unless he abolished slavery in the colonies they would abolish his authority. Every citizen has an interest in all the property of his government, because the property contributes to the support of government. Money and provisions are as essential to war as soldiers, and whenever the purse is emptied, or the credit that supplies it is exhausted, the war ends, regardless of the maintenance of our rights. It is the property of the country that gives money and credit, without these there can be no national defence.

Every species of property makes up the sum total of a national wealth which helps to throw the shield of protection around all, both land, negroes, money stocks, agricultural products and implements, ships, goods, wares and merchandize, horses, hogs, cattle, mules, sheep, mechanical implements, and every other species of effects go into the account of a nation's means, and all these different kinds of property call alike on the government for protection, for each contributes to the protection of every person.

It has sometimes been suggested that he that owns no slaves will feel no interest in the controversy between the North and South. This cannot be so, for he has his person and property requiring protection as well as the slave owner; if he has less property to protect, he has not less of what is far more important to all, his liberty and life. If the landed interest is assailed will the non-slaveholder say, I own no land, and will therefore give you no assistance. If the contest grows too warm I will go to some country of more peace and quiet; but he cannot always go, he has other interests that will bind him to the soil.

If the ship laden by the merchant with our products should be attacked and destroyed on distant seas, would the farmer, the mechanic, the laborer, and others, who own no ships, say I have no interest in it, and therefore will not join in an effort to avenge the wrong? If these attacks continue to be made I will have my effects carried by British vessels. No such response would be made; they would say the flag of my country has been wronged; that flag that gives protection to the persons and property of all; we will avenge it. To illustrate this further, suppose one man owns cattle, another horses, another mules, and another hogs; if the man that owns cattle should be attacked, will the others refuse to assist? if each of the others should be assailed in like manner he would have to look to his own arm for protection, and thus all would fall an easy prey to the strong hand of their better organized enemy. Suppose a cruel and relentless attack

should be made on the mechanical interest of the country, would others say we have no concern in it, we can get our wants supplied elsewhere, you must take care of yourselves. If this rule is to apply to property it will be extended to persons. If the sailor on a foreign sea shall be oppressed of his rights, would our countrymen at home desert him! Never; the persons and property of every kind would extend the strong arm of protection. Persons protect property, which in return gives the country increased means for the protection of persons. The purse gives not only munitions of war, but has often contributed soldiers; many of the best fought battles of England have received assistance from the foreign soldier.

The war of 1812 was fought for the rights of our seamen, and the whole country with all its property contributed to it. A nominal tax on tea, which was used by very few persons, was the immediate cause of the Revolutionary war; a glorious revolution, in which all banded together in a common cause and gave protection to our rights.

The question is, do slaves constitute a part of our property—do they increase the products of the country and contribute to our national wealth and to the support of the government? If they do, this kind of property is entitled to the protection of the government.

When ever in any country the doctrine is established that no man is under obligations to protect property of the kind of which he has none, the conflicts of the different sorts of property holders will be so great that the destruction of society will be inevitable. The war will not be to protect us from aggressions abroad but will be for each class of property holders to protect themselves from the attacks of the others. The entire government would be disintegrated, and we should all be involved in one common agrarianism and soon have nothing to protect.

It may be said that if slavery was abolished the prices of lands would go down; so would every other kind of property. If you go to the country where there are no slaves, the land is in possession of the capitalist; so it would be here, the capital would seek land for investment, and the land owner, with a view to enhance it, would do as has been done in the Northern States, invite foreign labor, which would come in competition with the present white laborer; this foreign labor with the free negro labor, would be found to be very oppressive to the poor. It is a fact well worthy of note that the Southern States, in proportion to the population, have not the number of paupers nor criminals that the Northern States have.

It has been said that the non-slaveholder has no interest in slavery. The school fund that is appropriated for the education of the children of all, levies a contribution on this property. The infirm poor who has no home, looks in part to it, for his support. It contributes to the support of all the branches of government, and alike to the protection of the rights of person of all. If Northern property and stocks shall depreciate \$400,000,000 at the prospect of losing the benefit of the trade of the slave States, what would be the effect if slavery were abolished. Neither the Northern States nor Great Britain could do without cotton supplies. In confirmation of this, while every other species of property has depreciated, cotton has advanced, on the belief that the condition of the country might shorten the supply,

If a large dealer, in any county in the State fails, he usually injures his neighbors, and not unfrequently takes some of them with him into bankruptcy. He owes his neighbor a debt, who expects to get it to pay another neighbor, who in turn expects to pay with it some other obligation; he fails to collect, he is sued, and in return he sues, their suits cause many others. Suppose a half dozen extensive dealers were to fail in a county, it would carry ruin to many families. What would this be to the abolition of slavery property in a county,

a majority of the owners of which, without it, would be unable to pay their liabilities. What would they have with which to pay their debts? With the majority of the slaveholders bankrupt, where would the house carpenter, the coach-maker, the tailor, shoe-maker, wagon and wheel-maker, and blacksmith, and cabinet-maker, and other mechanics find market for their manufactures?—How would the merchant get his money to buy goods with, or any other person whose necessities required him to raise it? Those who had money due, could buy their debtor's property at any price, while the entire county, if dependent on its own people for purchasers would become bankrupt. But what would become of the entire country if \$2,000,000,000 of slave property was destroyed? There is no country in the world, that could withstand the shock. Bankruptcy and ruin would overwhelm the entire population; hunger and want would stalk through the land; an amount of suffering unknown to any civilized country would ensue, labor would want employment, and all business would stop. Suppose the non-slaveholder objects to slavery because it cheapens labor, and in some instances comes into competition with him. So does every labor saving machine or invention. The rail-roads and steamboats of the country have taken away the employment of thousands of laborers, while the sewing machine has supplanted the business of millions. Every improved agricultural implement diminishes the demand for labor, and the workshop of every mechanic and the factory of every manufacturer is filled with inventions that save labor and increase the profits of capital. If competition is to be a cause of abolishing slave labor, the same reason would drive the horses, mules and oxen from the country when the population becomes more dense. If these animals were taken from the farm, the demand for agricultural labor would be quadrupled. It is the conflict between labor and capital, and is going in every civilized country in the world. Capital wants to increase its profits, and labor wishes to increase its wages. When the negro labor is confined to the fields and menial service, and the white labor is employed in the mechanical and other higher pursuits, we shall have an improvement on what is already the best system of labor known to the world—and so long as sugar, coffee, rice and cotton are necessary to the wants and comforts of civilized man, the negro or some other race will, under the constraint of superior intellect cultivate them.

In vain have I looked for the the streaks of returning light; the darkness and gloom thickens. A few hopeful meetings have been held in some of the fanatical States, but there is no evidence of the great change of popular sentiment that is necessary for the safe recognition of our rights. For twenty-five years we have been told to wait, that the slavery fanaticism was a sort of moral epidemic that would work its own cure. We are still told to wait, although it will soon have the government, the purse and sword, with which to crush us; it has been taught them as a part of their education and religion.

The opening prayers of their sabbath-schools teaches the tender minds to hate us; and their common school books have horrid pictures of negroes in chains, cruelly beaten by heartless masters, with a view to work on the sympathies of the young minds. Their ministers who ought to have been men of peace, have, every sabbath, opened on our southern institutions; they have instructed mothers as of holy writ to hate us; they, in turn, have instructed their children with their own feelings, until a generation has grown up who ought to have been our brothers, but they are our bitterest enemies. Not content with invading all the ramifications of society with its pestilential spirit; it has invaded their high schools, colleges and universities in order to keep the minds of educated men poisoned. It has invaded the sacred desk, and driven those who were wont to worship at the same

altar, to different communion tables, and their churches that once dwelt in harmony, are now divided with bitter enmity. The cause that is strong enough to divide churches, will, when the entire people become imbued with it, divide States.

Religious fanaticism has already seized the mind with a firm grasp, from which it is difficult to free it. It becomes too wise to be taught, derives all its sources of judgment from a misguided instruction. Inspired with their distorted views of holy writ, it hides its evil deeds beneath the garb of religion, and whenever truth fails to establish its dogmas protection is sought in the higher laws of conscience. You can teach new generations to avoid the follies of the past, but you cannot teach the old fanatic to retrace his steps. If Cotton Mather had lived until the present he would have been as much the advocate of burning witches as he was in his own day. The malady is without cure, and should we wait for another generation to do us justice, we should have no rights to protect; the ruin of our country will have been accomplished.

Amid all the anxiety to save the Union, and the distress brought on the country, their President elect has kept silent as the tomb. If he had intended to recognize the right of the south, he would have poured oil on the troubled waters. To the distressed laboring classes of the north, thrown out of employment by the revolution which is going on, he would have proclaimed that the flag of our common country should wave alike for the protection of the property of the citizen of every State. Potent as his voice is for good he has not said a word. He has seen the mechanics and poor white laborers of his own section in want; with the property of the States depreciated hundreds of millions, and the national treasury on the brink of bankruptcy, yet the negro was dearer to him than the redress of all these grievances. The very tenacity with which he and his party hold to their doctrines, prove that they are their convictions.

He has selected for the first place in his cabinet one who has led the attack of the irrepressible conflict and the higher law doctrines; who has spent the best part of his life in waging war on the institutions of the South. For another place he has chosen one who has spent his life in advocating the equality of the negro with his own race, and in urging his claims to an association with the white man. W. H. Seward and S. P. Chase have long been known as two of the reckless spirits that were rapidly hurrying the country to ruin.

For other places the names spoken of have been more noted for bigotry and fanaticism than wisdom and patriotism. Whatever hopes may have been indulged, that he will become the President of nation of States, is dissipated by the dark complexion of his Cabinet.

Some few chosen leaders have used occasionally a kind word, and have proclaimed their devotion to the Union. This they might well do; for the Union has always protected their rights and bestowed on them its choicest blessings. Some of their party have kept a grum, sullen silence, while others, with a fiery spirit of defiance, have proclaimed to us a submission, or subjugation with fire and sword intermingled with the horrors of servile and civil war.

The party organ of the State of New York, in view of the overwhelming crisis that was overspreading all the industrial, commercial and financial pursuits announced a willingness to settle up with a new compromise. The electoral college of the Republicans of that State, meeting soon after for casting their votes for President, bade the editor to return to their black idols. or they would ostracise him from the party.

The Governor of the same State, who recommended compromise in broad

platitudes, had his weakness revealed the day before he sent his message. by having his favorite partizans beaten in his own State for the office of speaker of one of the branches of the Legislature.

The Governor of Pennsylvania recommended coercion, compromise and the repeal of the Personal Liberty Bill, while a few days after his entire party voted against taking the unconstitutional act from the Statute Book. The Legislatuer of Vermont voted down the same proposition, two to one. Since the Presidential election the Governor elect of Massachusetts joined in a free negro procession in the streets of Boston, to celebrate the felonious raid on Virginia. Yet the gains in the local elections in this State, that gave seventy thousand majority against the constitutional candidates, are heralded as great reactions in popular sentiment.

We may coerce their people for the time being by breaking up their business, and bringing ruin on their manufacturers, and by throwing their operatives out of employment, but you can no more coerce their vicious principle out of them than they can coerce the South into submission to their oppression. When you take the outside pressure from their pockets they will be the same old purtians with their higher law consciences. In the expression of these views I allude only to the dominant party; for I know they have many true and patriotic men in all the Northern States; but they are without power, and according to present indications will continue so.

We are all determined to leave the Union, if we fail to get our rights in it. With this determination, would it not be prudent to prepare for either alternative? Should we not prepare to withdraw so as to act promptly if the emergency should arise? I think it has already arisen; many of you think it has not, but that it may arise at an early day. Prudence would say to those who think the time has come, as well as to those who think it may come—call a convention, and be prepared to act according to the emergency of the case. Suppose Lincoln and his party, after they are installed in office, shall bring to bear the power of the Federal Government on us. Shall we then wait to go through the forms of convening the Legislature to call a convention to withdraw from the Union? Or shall we be precipitated into revolution by usurpation, pleading in justification the stern dictates of necessity.

Four of the slaveholding States are already out of the Union, and in a few days more others will go. Louisiana, Tennessee, Virginia and Texas have already called conventions. Kentucky and Missouri will, at an early day, follow. What ought North-Carolina to do? She has the same grievances that have put a part of the States out of the Union, and that have and will cause the other Slave States to put themselves in a condition to go if the occasions shall require. We are not bound to go if we do pass the convention bill. If the people say go, we will go; if they say otherwise, we will stay. I believe on the 4th day of March next, unless the Black Republicans retrace their steps, there will not be three Southern States in the old Union of States.

In the presidential campaign these republicans were offered squatter sovereignty, the Union, the Constitution, and the enforcement of the laws, and national protection to the persons and property of all both by land and sea; all these they repudiated: they chose the negro; they prevailed in the election with the full knowledge that the question of disunion would be presented in the event of their success. What then shall we do? I would call a convention and go out of the Union, unless we had unmistakable evidences that our rights would be acknowledged and respected by prompt amendments to the Constitution, backed up by change in public sentiments. But of this there is no hope. Let us go out and unite with our friends of the southern States.

Of all the plans suggested the least agreeable to me is the formation of a central confederacy. There are to day more signs of reaction in the New

England States which are to be left out, than in those it proposed to take into the new copartnership. The same cause that will compel us to go out of the old Union, will compel us to leave a central confederacy; the free border States would steal negroes and preach incendiarism quite as strong in the new Union as they did in the old one.

We ought not only to settle the rights of property, but we ought to have these doctrines of coercion settled. If the majority of States are to have the power to coerce the minority, then in a confederated republic the latter have no protection. A tyranny of States is quite as bad as a tyranny of individuals. The theory at the time of the formation of the government was that the whole world was inimical to republics—that a common sense of danger would keep them together, and cause them to endure even oppression before they would withdraw from the common league; and that this power on the part of the minority to withdraw, would cause their rights to be respected. This question of unlimited power of the majority we ought to have settled. We ought to require that free negroes should not be allowed to vote; if they are with the accessions from immigration and runaway slaves from southern States, they will soon begin to control both State and federal elections in some of the States. Unless this is done the free negro vote will be constantly wielding the balance of power.

It has been urged by some that we should be in a more defenceless condition out of the Union than in it. It is the first time I have ever heard that we are strengthened by having enemies around our firesides. In the Union we have only the remonstrance of a powerless minority in Congress; out, we would have all the force of king cotton and commercial treaties. No better illustration of this can be given than the following; a negro killed his master in an effort to recapture him, and made his escape to Ohio. The Governor of Kentucky demanded, while the Governor of the former State refused to deliver him up and gave him protection. Precisely the same case happened by the escape of a slave from Missouri into Canada, a foreign country. He was demanded and under treaty stipulations delivered up to the law. Our northern friends, under a different government, would find it much more to their advantage to trade with us than to steal negroes; gain would soon take the place of false philanthropy. Now we have no protection, then we would have both the sword and commerce.

We are sometimes told that all the world is against slavery. This may be so in theory, but is not so in practice. Many of the most powerful governments depend on slave labor for supplies of cotton, sugar, coffee and rice. Some of them could not exist a single year without them. If England could afford to whip China because they would not buy opium from them, I should think she would have a much greater interest to interfere with those who were trying to cut off her supply of cotton.

Let us get ready to withdraw, saying to the northern States, you have done us wrong, unless you give immediate evidence of your purpose to yield our rights, we shall leave the Union, peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must.

We may patch up another compromise, but there can be no safety to us as long as the northern States deny our right to hold the negro as property. With the contest in those States between capital and labor, fanaticism pervading all the walks of life, sickly sentimentality taking the place of reason, infidelity rooting out religion, the pulpit changed into the political rostrum, with an atmosphere that tolerates free love and Fourierism, and produces Mormonism and bigamy, all presided over by the demoralising doctrines of spiritualism, it is much to be feared that some of them will soon

degenerate into agrarianism, and become less desirable members of the confederated republic than they have heretofore been.

It has been urged that the election of Mr. Lincoln to the presidency is no cause for dissolution of the Union. If he and his party had been content on their elevation to power to administer the government according to the Constitution and laws, as many believed they would, the question would have worn quite a different aspect; but instead of this, they have indicated their purpose to urge their fanatical policy. If Great Britain had declared war against us, we would have made due preparation to meet her. The republican party have declared a war on our institutions, that if successful must be more disastrous in its consequences than any we have ever been engaged in, and yet we have not made preparation to resist them. The duty on tea was the crowning act of the series that brought on the revolutionary war. The election of Lincoln, with his party avowals, will be the last of the aggressive acts that will dissolve the Union.

We cannot evade the question, we have to remain with the North or go with our friends of the South. If the entire South should be unable to protect herself from aggression in the present government, what can Virginia, North-Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri and Arkansas do in the Union, shorn of nearly half of her protecting power? Would an overbearing enemy be less merciful to a weakened opponent, whose ruin was meditated? There is no alternative, we shall have to go with the States south of us, we have kindred feeling, pursuits and institutions that will bind us together. We shall have no supposed irrepressible conflict between the labor systems of different States.

There is certainly great danger of collision between the two sections. However much we may desire to avoid it, the do nothing policy will not shield us from an attack. The true policy is, in peace prepare for war. Shall we learn nothing from the history of the past? With five years notice, the impending crisis that ended in the war of 1812, found the country unprepared. The destruction of property and commerce that resulted from it, would have paid a large part of the expenses of the war. Thirteen years strife, with increasing bitterness like the present, found our ancestors totally unprepared for the great struggle of the Revolution. Our safety lies in prompt withdrawal from the Union and the immediate formation of a Southern Confederacy.

The great danger of delay is, it may cause the abolition horde to believe that it was caused by a division of sentiment favorable to them. If the worst should come, with such convictions on their minds, it may cost us an attempted invasion of our State to look for their supposed sympathizers, and our invaders will attempt to excite servile war and insurrection. We have many well-tried, true and faithful friends in each of the States from which we propose to separate; these patriotic men will contribute to the formation of good neighborly feeling between the two Republics.

We are the injured party; it is their duty to offer redress; a just and reasonable proposition for the protection of our rights, would at all times have been acceptable to me. I regret much that such a proposition has not been offered. Let us call the convention, let the voice of the State be heard; when the speaks let us all be loyal to the voice of a common mother. That voice will say, unite with our sister Southern States.

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